



Editorial Note

It is a pleasure to share the 9th Issue of the International Journal of African Development (IJAD) Vol. 5.1 for Spring 2018. This issue covers seven research papers that entail a wide range of topics of African development challenges and opportunities. The contributors explore topics such the danger of tribal identity politics based on case studies, energy transition challenges for sustainable development, the impact of motivation on employee performance in insurance companies, whether inclusive growth promote effective regional integration among African states, the value of indigenous knowledge for development debate, a comparative study of breaking the poverty trap across African states, and integrating the youth into politics and economics for the African Development Agenda 2063.

The contributing authors explore African sustainable challenges with case studies from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, and including regional and continental issues for Africa. The origins of the contributions include universities and research institutions from countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Germany, Turkey, Uganda, Lesotho, Namibia, and Japan.

With this brief note, I invite our readers from African States and around the world to read the details of each paper in this volume and share them with your colleagues. I am happy to report readership of IJAD published papers in past issues are widely read and downloaded by thousands around the world. At this time, we have a back log of submissions that we plan to include in future issues after a peer review of the papers.

Finally, I thank all members of the IJAD Team, including our copy editor's excellent editing from participants who often have native languages that are not English. As well as the copy editor, there are others including our ScholarWorks team who work voluntarily including yours truly. In the future, we invite our readers to kindly donate funding as much as you can to Western Michigan University to continue both the work of IJAD and African Development Policy Research. We would also value advice regarding receiving funding from International Grant Agencies.

I wish you all happy reading of the important papers in this issue.

Sincerely,

Sisay Asefa, PhD, Professor of Economics
Editor in Chief of the *International Journal of African Development*

The Tigray Identity and the Paradox in the Securitization of the Oromo and Amhara Identities in Ethiopia

Anwar Hassen Tsega¹, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

Tigray's ethnic nationality is the minority identity in the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of four political parties under the leadership of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). For decades, the ruling party has governed by pitting the Oromo and Amhara against one another. Accordingly, the Oromo-Amhara solidarity is the greatest threat to the Ethiopian government. Within the framework of the Copenhagen school, we analyzed the securitization of the two majority identities. This essay is split into two sections. The first examines why and how the Oromo and Amhara identities have been securitized by the dominant force of TPLF within the governing EPRDF coalition. The second section examines the implications and consequences of this securitization. I argue that the securitization, while a natural choice in many respects, has perhaps been detrimental to the overall security of the Ethiopia's Tigray-dominated government that perceives the Oromo and Amhara as a serious threat to Ethiopia's leadership.

The TPLF Political Party as the Securitizing Actor

As an authoritarian government and noncompetitively elected party state, the TPLF led government is deeply concerned with issues of legitimacy, and assert that it has the right to rule all those within its borders. Although the TPLF established the EPRDF in order to gain a national base and legitimacy in Ethiopia, it never lost its minority identification, and this has always been a source of insecurity (Tadesse, & Young, 2003). The EPRDF is therefore left with a dilemma – being an umbrella of ethno-national fronts of which the TPLF forms 6% of the ethnic portion, but it is the dominant political force of the country. On such a dubious platform of legitimacy and as the leaders of a 'minority,' the TPLF "either does not have, or has failed to create, a domestic political and social consensus of sufficient strength to eliminate the large-scale use of force" (Buzan, 1983, p. 94). If they are to remain in power, the TPLF clearly needs to build on this position because of the importance of "national identity and social cohesion in terms of the degree to which the population identifies with the nation-state and to accept its legitimate role in their lives" (Jackson, 2007, p. 203) The EPRDF therefore has to both appear inclusive while simultaneously promoting "the ANDM [Amhara National Democratic Movement], OPDO [Oromo People Democratic Organization] and the SEPDM [Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement] to the vanguard of the people of the People's Republic" (Ashine, 2012) as this is where its main volume of support comes from. However, the EPRDF's ethnic policy has empowered some groups but has not been accompanied by dialogue and reconciliation. Real power in Ethiopia is in the hands of the TPLF. The other parties in the governing collisions are puppets,

and TPLF is their puppet master (International Crisis Group, 2009). The TPLF, therefore, is the securitizing actor, as it “securitize(s) issues by declaring something, a referent object, existentially threatened” (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998, P. 36)

The Tigrayans as the Referent Object of Security

Referent objects are “things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival” (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998, P. 36). In this case, the referent object is the Tigrayan’s ethnic identity, as referent objects “can be collective identities” (Emmers, 2007, p. 172). These minorities fought to liberate their ethnic elites from the oppressive military regimes. However, due to domestic tensions at all corners of the country, the Tigrayans along with some representatives from the majority Oromo and Amhara populations formed allies to be called the EPRDF.

The Reasons for Securitizing the Oromo and Amhara Identities

Why has the TPLF political party as the securitizing actor chosen the Tigrayan identity as its referent object? Essentially, securitizing the Oromo and Amhara identities is a means to an end, that end being ethnic dominance and regime security.

Extraordinary measures of securitizing the Oromo and Amhara identities:

The Ethnic Classification Project from the Transitional Government to the Federal Democratic Republic (1991-1994).

One method used by the TPLF led by the ruling political coalition has been that of naming and classifying ethnic groups. Meles Zenawi (the former PM) engineered a one-party rule for the TPLF and his Tigrayan inner circle with the complicity of other ethnic elites that were co-opted into the ruling alliance, the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The Front promised freedom, democracy and ethnic devolution but became highly centralized and tightly controlled the economy and suppressed political, social, ethnic and religious liberties. Ethiopia’s political system and society have grown increasingly unstable largely because the TPLF has become increasingly repressive, while failing to implement the policy of ethnic federalism it devised over twenty-five years ago to accommodate the land’s varied ethnic identities. The result has been greater political centralization associated with ethnicization of grievances. The TPLF has remained the center of political decision-making in the EPRDF and kept the principles and discourses of its guerrilla years. This includes Leninist “democratic centralism,” in which the executive and central committees make all major political decisions, and then transmit orders to junior officials and administrators. “Revolutionary democracy” that advocates capitalism and free market is promoted, but at the same time the state and party has retained iron control through five-year development plans. Meles’s absolute pivotal role developed during the armed struggle to overthrow the Derg – the military regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam that ruled from 1974 to 1991 – when he was a core member of the TPLF, an ethno-Marxist guerrilla movement founded in the northern Tigray region (International Crisis Group, 2012).

Exoticization of the Oromo and Amhara Identities as a means of securitization.

One of the more obtuse ways of securitizing the Oromo and Amhara identities is by dominating the internal other. This is because “the objectified portrayal of majorities as exoticized is essential to the construction of the Tigray’s minority, the very formulation of the Ethiopia ‘nation’ itself” (Yalew, 2014). Regarding naming, this intense othering is designed to quantify the majorities as commodities rather than equal footed citizens. It seems “the state has turned its gaze upon the internal other, engaging in a formalized, commodified, oriental orientalism that may be focused on the minorities but represents a long tradition of fascination with the outsider in Ethiopian society” (Saed, 1978 in Yalew, 2014). Securitizing the Oromo and Amhara identities in this unique manner and emasculating the other is essential to the EPRDF. “Belonging to a distinct culture tells us ‘who we are,’ and it is this process of self-identification which is key to nations” (Roe, 2007, p. 218). This non-violent and arguably non-repressive means of objectification nevertheless constitutes a speech act, as “the exoticization of majorities essentializes the imagined identity of the Tigrayans and reaffirms Tigre feelings of superiority” (Yalew, 2014) is crucial to the existence of the regime.

As ethnic mobilization was the TPLF’s means to seize power, it now appears that the ethnic polarization was created as a result of threatening the state power structure and national cohesion. There is insecurity when sharing the national agenda, mistrust against the government and other ethnic groups, many times irrational (political and economic) competition, and a new dynamic of the ‘we vs. them’ conception (Berhe, 2008). The previous Prime Minister Meles was the unchallenged intellectual and ideological guide of the party and government, and as a result, had accumulated a disproportionate share of power in the Ethiopian state. He had successfully and effectively marginalized his TPLF opponents and concentrated power to his own hands and those of close colleagues (Tadesse, & Young, 2003). Moreover, the TPLF promoted hatred of the other two major ethnicities (The Oromo and Amhara). They gave names for Oromo “Tebab” and for Amara “Temketgna.” The name “Tebab” in Amharic language stands for ‘Narrow Oromo Nationalists’ as the Oromos believe in Oromoness, and “Temketgna” stands for ‘Arrogant Amhara Nationalists’ as the Amharas believe in Ethiopianess. Indeed, it is a deliberate ‘speech act’ used for the last 25 years to subjugate the other ethnic majorities and solidify the referent object (the Tigray identity) at the center. It helped the TPLF to increase its power by dividing the two largest ethnic groups.

The Securitization Process

The most notable feature of the securitization process of the Oromo and Amhara identities is that it is circular. The securitizing actor (the TPLF) securitizes the Oromo and Amhara identities (which the EPRDF is also comprised of) from an internal threat (other Ethiopian citizens) by subverting and subsuming the internal other (Amharas and Oromos). While “transforming an issue into a security question only requires the audience’s acknowledgement that it is indeed a threat” (Emmers, 2007, p. 173), in this case, the audience is the referent object of which the securitizing actor is also a part. Therefore, admission of the existence of a threat is pre-determined as long as

the audience (Tigrayan Ethiopians) keep faith in the securitizing actor (the TPLF), which it is not going to do whilst the securitizing actor has securitized their identity. This therefore legitimizes “the claims of the state to have authority over citizens as citizens [which] provide a source of its ability to exert violence against them” (Krause, & Williams, 1997, p. 45). This logical process is difficult to follow, but it boils down to a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby, as the EPRDF articulates, the threat is an “existential threat to a referent object” (Emmers, 2007, p. 170) and hence propagates its own existence because “in practice, the idea of state security – the integrity and functioning of the institutions and idea of the state – and regime security – the security of the ruling elite from violent challenge – become indistinguishable” (Jackson, 2007, p. 205).

The Implications and Consequences of Securitization

Marginalizing the dominant Ethnic Nationalities - the Oromo and Amhara.

The fall-out from the securitization of the Oromo and Amhara identities was in many ways quite predictable. Favoring the minority ethnic group and trying to dominate other cultures is usually met with ill feeling and violent resistance. Ethiopia has been left with the lingering problem of large marginalized groups, which have implications for the threat towards territorial control, and ultimately, for sovereignty. The net result of this failed forcible integration is that the EPRDF faces continuing ethnic unrest amongst ‘majority’ people (particularly in Oromia and Amhara) exacerbated by an assertive Tigrayan nationalism that the EPRDF has itself encouraged (directly and indirectly) in a bid to bolster its legitimacy by highlighting its patriotic credentials. It is a matter of time before two of the three members of the EPRDF, the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) desert them in their role as puppets. Both groups hold little real power, but simply have been personally rewarded for going along with the TPLF under the name of their ethnicity. The transparency of the close relationship between the Tigrayan identity and the Ethiopian state has made any pretensions of multinationalism increasingly difficult. One obvious such failure is amongst its major population because the OPDO/EPRDF’s ideological project in Oromia – to win recognition as the sole legitimate representative of Oromo’s interests and to make Oromos think of themselves as Ethiopians and citizens of the Ethiopia – has not been successful.

Ethnic cleansing of Amhara and forced displacement of Indigenous people from their Ancestral lands.

Population transfer as a method of gaining regional preponderance and ensuring the stability of the minority ethnic group is a deliberate activity so as to benefit from the resources of regions other than the Tigrayans’ original settlement. The net result of this is that “increased Tigrayan migration to participate in the region’s Sesaaam production continues to exacerbate ethnic tensions” (Tsega, 2017) Tigrayans flooded the territory, especially from the 1980s on, when the TPLF-led government reform program created new opportunities for migration and profit. Although they probably make up no more than 10 percent of the population, the Tigrayans are concentrated in Wolqayt’s cities and dominate the modern sectors of the economy. The close ties

between economics and demographics are illustrated here, as well as the fact that “many Wolqayts claim they are being pushed to the economic margins and overwhelmed by Tigre’s immigration.

In the next section, we will look at the economic implications of the securitization of the Tigrayans in these ethnic areas. Article 32 of the Ethiopian Constitution guarantees freedom of movement within the national territory. Ethiopia is also a signatory to several conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which clearly state that a citizen has the right to work and live in any part of his or her country. However, since 2012, ethnic Amharas have been subjected to forcible eviction from Guraferda Bench-Maji in the Southern Regional State as well as from the Beni Shangul region of Western Ethiopia. Targeting Amharas, one of the largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia, for illegal deportation is a barbaric act that will have dire consequences for fostering ethnic harmony in Ethiopia. Stoking hatred will only serve to destabilize the country (Endalk, 2013).

Moreover, there is an ongoing hostility in the Amhara region. The government’s annexing of the Wolqayt communities to the Tigray administrative region has raised a serious question from its indigenous Wolqayt people who claim to be Amhara. Others should not be surprised at the failure of communities to accept the imposition of identities that do not correspond with how they view themselves and their surroundings. Favoring the minority ethnic group ensures a strong base of support, but discontented majorities have the possibility of taking asymmetrical means to destabilize key elements of the EPRDF rule and the Ethiopian economy. As we established, Wolqayt and Addis Ababa, especially, are areas which are vital for the EPRDF to retain control for geopolitical imperatives. The securitization of the Oromo and Amhara identities comes with its own set of problems as “the formulations of Tigrayan nationalism generally limit the extent and ways that non Tigrayan Ethiopian voices are recognized, and the EPRDF has problems in dealing with ethnic or nationality difference other than as a function of economic development” (Tsega, 2017)

The Addis Ababa ‘Master Plan’ and the ‘Ethiopian Somali Special Forces’ as a means of displacing the Oromos from their Ancestral lands.

In April 2014, the government announced its readiness to implement what it called the "Addis Ababa Integrated Regional Development Plan" (the Master Plan for short), which proposed to annex most of the city's surrounding areas belonging to the National Regional State of Oromia. This provoked an immediate reaction from the public, but the government responded with brutal repression of the protests. Clashes are thought to have claimed 140 lives of students and farmers from the Oromia region. The announcement of the Master Plan led to another round of killing and arrests of the Oromo youth. Ethiopian jails were beefed up even more. Oromia was subjected to a continued state of terror. Ethiopia is fast becoming a concentration camp of Oromo people.

As many argue, Ethiopia’s tense ethnic federalism is being tested as it experiences the recent deadly clashes between ethnic Oromos and ethnic Somalis in the country’s dry and mainly pastoralist southeast. Local militia and police, including the controversial Somali Special Forces

known as the Liyu (for Amharic ‘special’) issued a proxy against the Oromo. There is no doubt that the Liyu force has full support of the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) government in Addis Ababa. The TPLF initially set up the Liyu police as a counter insurgency force against the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), a group fighting for self-determination for the Somali region. Importantly, these ethnic clashes arose during the time when there was ongoing protests in the Oromia and Amhara regions and while the two major ethnic groups showed their unity to resist the TPLF led ruling party. I argue that this was a deliberate political decision made by the TPLF, because without these new ethnic clashes at the Somali-Oromo border, the unrest would not have been erupted. Due to the silent response from the ruling government, one of the high-level OPDO officials, Abadula Gemedo (speaker of the House of People's Representatives), has resigned out of his own freewill.

Conclusion

In this analysis, the securitization of the Oromo and Amhara identities contradict the existing literature where “elites favor certain groups in the allocation of state resources, oppress minorities viewed as hostile, create minority scapegoat groups during times of unrest and appoint members of the elite’s own ethnic group to positions of power” (Jackson, 2007, p. 206). However, there is a paradox in that a tiny minority in the ruling coalition has not only become a securitizing actor and referent object in the securitization process but also demands and monopolizes federalism for the last 25 years. In the Ethiopian context, the TPLF was inherently and structurally deficient in establishing a genuine accommodative federal political framework in the country. Hence, it has been embarking on sustaining a political travesty via EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Force) that would assure its hegemonic project by using ethnic rights as a discourse to attract and subdue the disoriented ethnic elites. As the Copenhagen school forecasted, securitization is not a positive tool of statecraft. “Security is what we make of it” (Booth, 1997, p. 93), and “what constitutes an existential threat is regarded as a subjective matter” (Emmers, 2007, p. 172), but in dealing with these subjective threats, we often ignore other threats and simultaneously create new ones.

To ensure the Tigray identity at the expense of others, “the state confronts powerful social forces with substantial coercive force, which in turn provokes violent resistance” (Jackson, 2007, p. 202). But securitizing an issue can make you vulnerable to the consequences of the exceptional actions you undertake, and something that has been bitterly experienced by those in Rwanda, where the traditional use of State violence in the exercise of power has created deep roots in history. It is this violence that facilitated Tutsi political domination over Hutu masses (Batware, 2012). The government intensively works in a divide rule system so as to polarize the two major ethnic groups unless and otherwise its ruling period might be at an end.

For decades, the ruling party has governed by pitting the Oromo and Amhara against one another. Now, the two groups are joining forces against the government; therefore, the Oromo-Amhara solidarity has become the greatest threat to the Ethiopian government. However, as much as the dominant elite TPLF utilized ethnicity to come this far and defend the present power

structure, the marginalized elites may use similar tools to resist domination by fomenting ethnic conflicts in which civil liberties and human rights, the essential elements of building civil society, will be the casualties. As Berhe (2008) strongly argued, ethnic mobilization can only play a positive role if it is based on establishing and institutionalizing civil liberties and human rights upon which diversities are accommodated and differences are mediated democratically. To the aforementioned, Bete Amhara is a typical and successful resistance movement in the Amhara region - witness the rise of Amhara Nationalism. The Copenhagen school advocates desecuritization and repoliticization as more sustainable methods of dealing with security issues in the political sphere.

I believe this securitization essay has shown the decidedly limited benefit of the Oromo's and Amhara's identity's securitization. This is due to the fact that securitization is succeeded only by acceptance from the audience so as to move the issue above the sphere of normal politics (Wæver, 1995). However, by observing the overall hostilities in the country, one can understand that Ethiopia's Tigray-dominated government may not be able to sustain its hold on power for much longer if the current nationwide uprising in Ethiopia against a minority tyranny continues without changing its views. Though it is not going to be attempted here, what can be suggested is that desecuritization of the Oromo and Amhara identities through power sharing can be used as a means of curing the current unrest and future political stability.

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